



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/46/603
25 October 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-sixth session
Agenda item 98 (b)

HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING
ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE
ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Developments relating to the activities of the Centre
for Human Rights

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 45/180 of 21 December 1990 on developments relating to the activities of the Centre for Human Rights, the Assembly requested "the Secretary-General to act promptly to respond to the needs of the Centre for Human Rights" and to indicate "the human resources required for the Centre to carry out its functions adequately". In paragraph 2 of the same resolution, the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General "to include in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 programme and resource proposals for long-term solutions" which respond to the needs of the Centre and are commensurate with its workload. Finally, the Assembly, in paragraph 3, requested the Secretary-General "to submit an interim report on the implementation of the present resolution (E/CN.4/1991/72) to the Commission on Human Rights at its forty-seventh session and a final report to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session, under the item entitled "Report of the Economic and Social Council".

2. It should be noted that the Commission on Human Rights, by resolution 1991/23, recalled General Assembly resolution 45/180 and welcomed General Assembly resolution 45/248 B, section V, providing interim measures in terms of additional resources for the Centre on Human Rights, and requested the Secretary-General, *inter alia*, to submit, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on developments relating to the Centre to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session.

3. In his report to the Economic and Social Council on the situation and development regarding the logistical and human rights resources support for the activities of the Centre for Human Rights in the field of human rights (E/1990/50), the Secretary-General provided a comprehensive review of the situation of the Centre over the past decade. The present report provides an update of events that have taken place over the past year and is presented pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 45/180.

A. International instruments

4. As indicated in the Secretary-General's reports, notably in his report to the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1990 (E/1990/50), the workload relating to the operations of human rights treaty-monitoring bodies has increased dramatically within the past several years. Since 1987, three additional bodies came into operation to monitor the implementation of specific international human rights instruments, namely, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in 1987), the Committee against Torture (in 1988), and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (in 1991). With the adoption by the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Assembly resolution 45/158, annex, of 18 December 1990), it is anticipated that during the coming biennium another treaty-monitoring body, the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families will be established. This will bring the total number of treaty-monitoring bodies to be serviced by the Centre for Human Rights during the biennium 1992-1993 to seven, more than doubling the number of such bodies.

5. In addition to the growth of treaty bodies, other main factors leading to increases in the workload have been the substantive qualitative changes in the approaches and methods of the various treaty bodies and the acceleration in their pace of operations, which entailed further demands for increased staff support.

B. Communications

6. Both in the reports of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, respectively, as well as at all levels of discussion in the Council and the Assembly, the urgent need for immediate additional human resources for the handling of complaints under existing procedures was recognized. Two areas were explicitly identified as meriting additional resources: (a) the handling of complaints under the procedure governed by Economic and Social Council resolution 1503 (XLVIII); and (b) the handling of complaints under the procedure governed by the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other existing treaty-based procedures.

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7. It may be mentioned in this context that, for three years in a row, the Human Rights Committee has emphasized in its annual report to the General Assembly that, without a substantial increase in the staffing resources to cope with the rapidly increasing workload, the work under the Optional Protocol procedure will seriously suffer. 1/

C. Special procedures

8. As has been described in the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Centre for Human Rights (E/1990/50) submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1990, United Nations policy-making organs have created, during the past decade, an ever-increasing number of extra-conventional procedures and mechanisms (the so-called "special procedures") to deal with cases of alleged human rights violations and to investigate and carry out fact-finding into such situations.

9. At its forty-seventh session, the Commission on Human Rights has again significantly augmented the number of special procedures and mechanisms with regard to both country situations and thematic issues as follows: three new country situations and a working group composed of five independent experts on the question of arbitrary detention were established.

10. The information submitted to the Centre by Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals on both country situations and phenomena has kept pace with the increase in procedures, and the number of individual cases requiring careful examination and transmission to the concerned Governments, in particular under the mandates on disappearances, summary executions, torture, and religious intolerance reached unprecedented proportions in the first quarter of 1991. In the area of disappearances alone, reports on some 7,000 individual cases have been received in addition to the unfinished case-load that had to be carried over from 1990. It is further expected that, in the area of the new procedure on arbitrary detention, thousands of complaints will reach the Centre for Human Rights once the Working Group has been established and its procedures have been made known. Under the urgent action procedure applied for cases of a particularly pressing nature, appeals on 1,080 individual cases were sent in 1990, i.e., cables on over four cases, on average, per working day.

11. By its resolution 1991/31, the Commission also decided to amplify the mandates relating to thematic procedures and mechanisms by requesting relevant working groups and special rapporteurs to follow closely the progress made by Governments in their investigations carried out within their respective mandates. The implementation of that resolution entails a constant and much more meticulous review of incidents and cases than has been made so far.

12. It must further be pointed out that, for the current year, working groups and special rapporteurs are planning to carry out missions to a total of 27 countries. Such visits in situ and the drafting of reports thereon necessitate labour-intensive preparatory work and in-depth analyses of country

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situations, including review of legislation and judicial practice. The new mandates referred to above were established by the Commission on Human Rights at its forty-seventh session and approved by the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1991, subsequent to the completion by the Secretary-General of his budget proposals for the biennium 1992-1993.

D. Prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities and vulnerable groups

13. The interim measures under the terms of General Assembly resolution 45/248 B, section V, did not address the activities related to prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities and vulnerable groups. These include several areas of activity, in particular those carried out under the Programme of Action for the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

14. The General Assembly, in its resolution 42/47 of 30 November 1987, spelled out these activities and decided that the Programme of Action should be incorporated into the regular budget. Although those activities were added to the workload of the Centre for Human Rights, it was not accompanied by an increase in regular resources as was pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1990/50, para. 31). This resulted in several activities under the programme having to be postponed; the Assembly noted this at its forty-fourth and forty-fifth sessions and requested that these activities be implemented.

E. Research, studies and standard setting

15. The activities aimed at the protection of vulnerable groups, such as children, women, victims of slavery and slave-like practices, minorities, the extreme poor, etc., have virtually doubled in recent years. The sector of the Centre for Human Rights that implements these mandates is significantly understaffed, thus affecting quantity and quality of output.

16. Since the Secretary-General's previous reports, action has been taken by the Commission on Human Rights on the Programme of Action for the Prevention of the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, which will require additional resources to keep it in line with the other, more specific human rights programme components dealing with the protection of the child.

17. In summary, this area currently handles 64 distinct mandates, coming from the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Rights and the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, representing a net increase of 30 per cent.

18. New responsibilities have been assigned to this sector. In the context of streamlining procedures, this area is coordinating the meetings of the major human rights bodies and the human rights documentation prepared for the

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Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. An average of 85 to 90 notes and/or letters per day are mailed from this area. The sessions of the Commission and the Subcommission and the relating working groups - an average of nine per year - are organized and serviced from this area.

F. Advisory services and technical assistance

19. Since the last report to the Economic and Social Council on this subject, the Centre for Human Rights has undertaken the preparation, implementation and follow-up of a large number of projects - programmes of advisory services and technical assistance, including those aimed at establishing national centres for training and documentation in the field of human rights. The establishment of national and regional infrastructures is in keeping with the new approach for technical cooperation in the field of human rights, which has been emphasized in recent resolutions of the Human Rights Commission. Thus, requests from Member States encompass a comprehensive spectrum of activities both of assistance and cooperation.

20. In the biennium 1990-1991, the Centre received 22 new requests and has undergone, or is starting new activities, in several countries from all regions of the world. Programmes of technical cooperation were concluded with the Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights of the Organization of African Unity, the Gambia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Poland, Bulgaria, Mongolia and Romania. Over the past year, human rights seminars or training courses were held at Sofia, San Remo, Cairo, Buenos Aires, Caracas, Nuuk, Moscow and Ouagadougou. Others are planned in Paris, Ulan Bator, Santiago de Chile, and Jakarta before the end of the year. In 1991, the Centre also expanded its fellowship programme, awarding fellowships to applicants from 42 countries.

21. The Centre offered some 100 internships in 1990 and 1991 and at present is restructuring the programme in order to ensure the best possible mutual relationship between the interns and the United Nations.

22. The Centre received 17 new requests for advisory services of experts in countries from all regions. In addition, during the present biennium, the Centre has expanded ongoing programmes, inter alia, in: Equatorial Guinea, Colombia, Guatemala and also in connection with the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights.

23. In this connection, it should be noted that the Commission on Human Rights adopted resolutions 1991/51, 1991/77 and 1991/80, respectively, for providing technical assistance and independent expert missions to Guatemala, Haiti and Equatorial Guinea, as well as to examine the human rights situation in these countries, which represent a further increase in the workload of the Centre in relation to the implementation of activities requested by the Commission. Requests for advisory services by some 30 States are pending implementation.

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G. External relations, documentation and publications

24. Since the last report to the Economic and Social Council on this subject, it should be noted that seven additional fact sheets were issued (fact sheet nos. 9 to 15) in six languages. During 1991, nine additional fact sheets will be prepared (nos. 16 to 24). Four issues (in two languages) of the Newsletter were published in 1990, and two issues have been published so far in 1991 (two additional issues will be published in 1991). Five ad hoc publications were issued in 1990 and six editions are to be prepared in 1991 (in six languages). Recurrent publications are being continuously updated and, during the biennium 1990-1991, the publication of several outstanding issues of the Yearbook on Human Rights and Official Records of the Human Rights Committee are foreseen.

25. As a consequence of the activities of the World Public Information Campaign for Human Rights, there has been a substantial increase in the number of requests for information and external relations activities of the Centre. The interest of public opinion in human rights issues and United Nations activities in this field has also grown considerably.

26. In the last year, there has been a marked increase in the requests for human rights materials. The Centre has developed a mailing list for the distribution of printed materials, including more than 5,000 addresses world wide. Schools, non-governmental organizations, academic and research institutions, national and regional human rights centres are more and more interested in receiving information and in cooperating with the United Nations. Furthermore, requests for human rights materials in additional local languages has prompted several non-governmental organizations and other organizations to undertake their translation and printing in a variety of countries.

27. During 1990, the Centre for Human Rights replied to more than 1,200 requests for information material emanating from several non-governmental organizations, universities, schools, mass media and the public at large. It is expected that the Centre will receive over 2,000 requests during 1991. During 1990, and so far in 1991, the Centre co-sponsored or actively participated in over 120 activities organized by Governments, non-governmental organizations and other human rights institutions world wide.

28. Another responsibility of the section relates to human rights teaching and education. A workshop is planned for 1991, together with a relevant publication on the subject. Additional activities are undertaken in close cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Labour Organisation and the International Red Cross with non-governmental organizations, academic and research institutions and the media.

H. 1993 World Conference on Human Rights

29. By its resolution 45/155 of 18 December 1990, the General Assembly decided to convene a World Conference on Human Rights in 1993. In the same resolution, the Assembly also decided, "in accordance with its resolution 42/211 of 21 December 1987 and without prejudice to the overall level of resources adopted by the General Assembly for the biennium 1990-1991 and the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 1992-1993, that the preparatory process and the Conference itself should be funded through the regular budget of the United Nations, without any implications for the programmes provided for under section 23 of the programme budget". The Assembly also invited "contributions of extrabudgetary resources to meet, inter alia, the cost of participation of representatives of least developed countries in the preparatory meetings and the Conference itself".

I. Measures regarding the Centre for Human Rights

30. The General Assembly, on the basis of reports presented by the Secretary-General (A/45/807 and A/C.5/45/66) decided, by its resolution 45/248 B of 21 December 1990, to authorize the Secretary-General to establish as at 1 January 1991 three posts (two Professional and one General Service) in relation to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

31. In the same resolution, the Assembly also decided that the Secretary-General should enter into commitments for further resources equivalent to four other posts, subject to review by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the basis of the results of his management and workload analysis which was to be completed no later than January 1991. As a result, additional resources for the establishment of two Professional (one P-4, one P-3) and two General Service (Other level) posts in connection with the increased work of the Communications Procedures Section of the Centre (complaints, appeals, petitions), under various existing confidential procedures, were authorized for 1991. These posts, as well as other resource requirements, have been requested in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

II. CONCLUSIONS

32. Increased resources were accorded at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly in response to the critical situation faced by the Centre for Human Rights in 1991. Since then, the workload of the Centre by reasons of decisions of intergovernmental and expert bodies has continued to increase in response to strongly felt international concerns.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No., 40 (A/44/40), para. 618.
